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An outline of the program of this 1966 conference at Wellesley College and transcripts of the speeches presented are included. A keynote address by Kenneth Mildenberger discusses language teacher preparation, research problems, and various teacher organizations. Three addresses consider prevention of a discontinum in elementary schools (Lincoln Lynch), secondary schools (Dorothy Chamberlain), and colleges (Jack Stein). James Powers and Robert Nelson both consider how to guarantee consistency of method, while problems of student placement are discussed by Anne Slack, Robert Collier, and F. Andre' Paquette. (AF)

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# Continuity in Foreign Language Instruction

*. . . . .A Conference Report*

## COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

## Department of Education

FL 001 087

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# FOREWORD

The Massachusetts Department of Education, Bureau of Elementary and Secondary Education, in cooperation with the Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages and the Massachusetts Foreign Language Association sponsored a special conference on Continuity in Foreign Language Instruction at Wellesley College on Saturday, April 30, 1966. The program was keynoted by a nationally recognized leader and by a group of distinguished panelists well known for their contributions to foreign language instruction.

The conference focused on the need for establishing, promoting and improving continuity in the sequence of language learning. Unsuccessful foreign language programs, obstacles in foreign language learning, high percentages of drop-outs, poor placement as evidenced in writings, studies, and surveys prompted the sponsors to bring together at a conference persons vitally interested and concerned with the *continuum* of foreign language instruction.

Continuity was examined vertically at three distinct levels; a cross-sectional analysis focused on the three aspects of administration and supervision, curriculum and instruction, placement and guidance. The result was a stimulating discussion among representatives of the various university departments, elementary and secondary schools, both public and private.

It is our hope that this publication may help administrators and teachers in their efforts to improve both the quantity and quality of foreign language instruction in the Commonwealth.

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CONFERENCE ON CONTINUITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

at Wellesley College

April 30, 1966

8:45 REGISTRATION Pendleton Hall

9:15

Greetings – James Grew, *Chairman of Conference*
Chairman, Massachusetts Advisory Committee
on Foreign Languages
Richard Clark, *President,* Massachusetts
Foreign Language Association
Jeannette McPherrin, *Dean of Freshman,*
Wellesley College

9:30

Keynote Addres– Kenneth Mildenberger, Modern Language Association

10:15 – 11:15

How Do We Prevent The Discontinuum?
(Administration and Supervision)
Presentation by Panel I
Paul Phaneuf, *Chairman,* Malden Public Schools
Lincoln Lynch, Pittsfield Public Schools
Dorothy Chamberlain, Somerville, New Jersey
Jack Stein, Harvard University

11:30 – 12:30

How Do We Guarantee Consistency of Method?
(Curriculum and Instruction)
Presentation by Panel II
Ernest A. Frechette, *Chairman,* Massachusetts Department
of Education
Andrea McHenry Mildenberger, City University of New York
James R. Powers, U. S. Office of Education
Robert Nelson, University of Pennsylvania

12:30 – 2:00 LUNCH

2:00

How Do We Place Students Properly?
(Placement and Guidance)
Presentation by Panel III
Anne Slack, Modern Language Project
Robert Collier, Belmont Public Schools
Andre Paquette, Modern Language Association

3:00

Summary of The Conference
Stowell Goding, Panel I, University of Massachusetts
Sister Julie, Panel II, Emmanuel College
Genevieve Donaldson, Panel III, Milton Public Schools

Concluding Remarks
Kenneth Mildenberger, Modern Language Association

# Keynote Address

by Kenneth Mildenberger

Fifteen, even just ten years ago, the overriding problem continually discussed at meetings such as this was how to stem and indeed reverse the alarming trend in American education which saw foreign language study dwindling on all sides and the imminent prospect that soon only in a few private schools and in the public schools of wealthier communities would language study continue. All of that has changed now and I need not dwell here upon the rich evidences.

Annually the foreign language enrollments soar higher and the attention of the profession is directed to a seemingly endless variety of other problems large and small as it seeks to cope with the new prosperity. Many of these other problems are national or even international in scope. Let me cite just a few which make the present and the future an exciting adventure as we move forward to develop a profession.

There is the critical matter of preparing new language teachers. You are all familiar with the NDEA Institutes where now at least 25,000 school teachers have had the opportunity to take six or eight weeks of advanced study. It has turned out that the NDEA Institutes have been what you might call a retreading operation, providing educational experiences which hadn't been completed in the regular preparation of the school teacher. Too many teachers were not ready to do the job that had to be done in the classroom.

One of the unfortunate things over the past few years has been that actually, despite the excitement and achievement of the NDEA foreign language institutes, there has resulted very little impact upon the regular college curriculum that prepares new foreign language teachers, and so it would appear as though we shall always need institutes to retread the new people coming out of the colleges so that they are able to do the job in the classroom.

However, we can't expect the bounty of the government to be there forever. Some day there will be no institutes. Some day we must face up to the fact that higher education must do the job thoroughly, whatever that may mean and however long that may take. I think you are all familiar with the efforts of Stowell Goding, one of your own people here, with his annual conference dealing with teacher training at the Modern Language Association meeting. He has accomplished a great deal there, and the MLA will publish in the May issue of *PMLA* a very important official policy statement on this problem, called the Modern Language Association Guidelines for Teacher Education Programs in Modern Foreign Languages.

Andy Paquette, of our MLA staff, has been the person who has developed this statement, consulting across the country with more than 500 people. It has been approved by the Foreign Language Program Advisory Committee and by the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification; it represents a policy statement that we hope will give guidance to the colleges and universities as they seek to develop the curriculum that will turn out the kinds of teachers that are needed today.

The October 1966 *Modern Language Journal* will be devoted to this statement and to a history and a publication of all kinds of documents, going back 25 years, dealing with this problem of teacher education in the modern language field.

Also on this subject I would like to call your attention to a new MLA publication called *Education of the Modern Foreign Language Teacher for American Schools* by Joseph Axelrod. The subtitle is *An Analysis of Ends and Means for Teacher Preparation Programs in Modern Foreign Languages Based on a Study of NDEA Foreign Language Institutes.* This extremely well-written study discusses what the ideal teacher should be like, then it analyzes some of the practices at NDEA institutes that have been extremely successful and which might be transferred to or adapted to the regular curriculum for preparing new foreign language teachers. This report will be available from the MLA within a week, and the cost of it is one dollar.

Turning to another major problem today, there is the critical problem of research and experimentation in modern foreign language instruction. A great deal of practical and theoretical work is going on all over the country, but information about it is scattered and often difficult to come by.

The MLA hopes that very shortly it will be able to announce a new service to the profession of far reaching significance. We expect to become a clearinghouse component of the U. S. Office of Education ERIC program. ERIC, E–R–I–C, in this context, is not a Norse explorer nor a cigar; it stands for Educational Research Information Center.

With financial assistance from the Office of Education, the MLA shall establish and develop a comprehensive repository of articles, monographs, unpublished reports, and so on, containing current useful information on the teaching of modern foreign languages in American education. Each item will be abstracted and indexed, special bibliographies and studies of the collection will be prepared and disseminated to the profession in a new publication. Every means will be employed to encourage new research and innovation based on the assembled corpus of past and present investigation. We shall be hearing a great deal more about this in the next year. For now I only remind you of the name – ERIC.

Another matter worth investigating is the teaching of foreign languages abroad. I suspect that much can be learned in both directions. We may soon see the opening of regular communication between the United States and colleagues abroad. Last fall the executive council of the MLA responded affirmatively to a long-standing invitation to become the United States constituent of an organization called the International Federation of Teachers of Modern Languages. This Federation, founded in 1934 to promote pedagogical aspects of language teaching, has been West European in its orientation and, as many of its leading personalities confess, rather moribund.

However, a new spirit is abroad in this organization. Two weeks ago I attended a meeting of its Central Committee in Rome. With a new secretariat of Scandinavians, it is preparing to move into a new phase of action and development. I came away from this meeting with representatives from Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia convinced that these colleagues in other countries can be useful to us and that we can be useful to them. We shall certainly pursue all possibilities for exchange of information and ideas.

Finally, I should like to mention one other major problem that we cannot ignore much longer. This is the matter of professional organization. It should be clear to all that the present crazy quilt organization of the foreign language profession is largely ineffective, sometimes working at cross purposes, and too frequently to no purpose at all. It is an irony of our times that the MLA which has spearheaded much of the new development in language teaching, especially in the schools —new methods, materials, tests, teacher education, and so on —is actually a learned society basically oriented to literary research. Despite the many services it provides from the strengthening of language instruction, it is not an organization which school teachers can be advised to join.

The Advisory Committee to the Foreign Language Program of the MLA, concerned about the relative ineffectiveness and inefficiency of professional organization in the foreign language field, has recently recommended to the MLA Executive Council that under MLA auspices a new national membership association be organized, dedicated to research and development in teaching at all levels and in all languages, with a journal that will disseminate comprehensive, significant information about the profession.

The MLA Executive Council will consider this recommendation in October. I have no idea what their reaction may be, but we may very well be on the brink of a new and transcendent development.

Well, these are a few of the more significant matters which loom largely on the horizon, a glimpse at the big picture. But let me return to what I said earlier. In all of this, the fundamental bedrock feature in this profession must be the continued activity of state foreign language associations and annual meetings such as this with professional people joining together to discuss real problems.

KENNETH MILDENBERGER – B.A. Queens College; M.A. and Ph.D. New York University; LL.D (Honorary), Middlebury College, has recently been appointed Director of Programs of the Modern Language Association. From 1952–58 he served with the Modern Language Association, Foreign Language Program, and was Associate Secretary of the Modern Language Association and Director of the Foreign Language Program when the National Defense Education Act was passed in 1958. He spent the next seven years with the United States Office of Education, first to organize and head the Language Development Program of the National Defense Education Act, and later to direct the Division of College and University Assistance.

## An Elementary School Administrator's Views On Preventing The Discontinuum of FLES

by Lincoln Lynch

Ladies and Gentlemen, I come to you this morning not as a linguist but as a person greatly interested in the FLES Program and very much in favor of strengthing an area of great concern to me. To that end I shall play the part of the "Devil's Advocate" and attempt to bring to your attention some of the factors which are contributing to what I feel is a deterioration in FLES Programs throughout the nation.

It has been said that the general public is delighted with the drive to bring foreign language into the elementary school. Enrollment has skyrocketed from a few thousand in 1952 to well over two million today, but a retrenchment seems to be taking place at the present time and I feel the reasons for this are well worth our examination. I might list them as follows:

(1) An increased emphasis on evaluation and the lack of effective evaluative tools which we might apply to our FLES Program.
(2) Federal emphasis and aid concentrated on the educationally disadvantaged with FLES rarely given any priority, NDEA institutes and Title III not withstanding.
(3) Ever increasing costs and the public insistence of a dollar value for a dollar spent.
(4) The serious concern of elementary school administrators relative to the continual decrease in the time allotted to the three R's without commensurate increases in the school day.
(5) Disenchantment with FLES by our secondary language teachers and more especially by secondary administrators who must give language instructors equal standing with other disciplines regardless of the number of periods or the length of their school days.
(6) The S.T.E.P. child status of foreign languages resulting from:
    (a) A lack of acceptance on the part of many older teachers.
    (b) The fact that many regard FLES as merely enrichment.
    (c) The fact that FLES, in many cases, deprives youngsters of Band, Orchestra, Chorus or Industrial Arts.
(7) Inadequately trained staff and the entrenched "older dogs" who very much resent the implementation of new methods and materials.
(8) A lack of continuity, articulation and over-all supervision.
(9) Increasing concern with the declining status of the traditional Latin Program and a developing vendetta between modern language and Latin teachers.
(10) The problem of selectivity in the grades and the lack of facilities and personnel in the junior high school which forces us to eliminate as many as sixty to seventy per cent of our sixth graders entering junior high school.
(11) The problem of transfer students caused by the ever increasing mobility of the American public.
(12) The difficulty of variation in instructional methods from school to school and grade to grade, particularly in larger systems.
(13) The lack of adequate supervision which is most necessary for the functioning of an effective program and leads to a lack of communication between FLES teachers and teachers dealing with other segments of the school curriculum.

These then are some of the serious problems which we face and, in passing, we might add to them such minor administrative variations such as whether or not the classroom teacher shall remain in the room with the FLES teacher, the problem of conflicting elementary supervisor schedules, special events, the cancellation of classes, often without advance notice, various organizational plans including departmentalization, the nongraded school and the lack of conformity of FLES grades with marking expectancies in other subject matter areas.

You will notice that I close on many controversial notes and again I stress the fact that I am with you. My intent is not to be capriciously critical but to work with you for the solution of some of these problems and the establishment of better and more effective FLES Programs. We, who are engaged in the over-all supervision of the course, need your help in solving these problems if our FLES Programs are to prosper.

The State Department is providing a greater degree of supervision and help; with their advice and resources and engaging in a program of self-examination let us begin today to work toward the solution of our problems and the establishment of stronger revitalized FLES Programs.

LINCOLN LYNCH – Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, Pittsfield Public Schools. He received both his B.S. and Ed.M. from Boston University. He has also done Graduate Study at the University of Massachusetts and taken courses from the Harvard and Boston University Extension Schools. He has taught in grades six through twelve, has been a teaching principal in Cummington, and a supervising principal at Lanesboro. He is Director of the Anti-Poverty Program in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

## How To Prevent The Discontinuum In Secondary Schools

by Dorothy Chamberlain

In this paper I shall attempt to give a few personal viewpoints on stemming the tide of the discontinuum in secondary school. It seems to me that one good way, though not an easy one nor always a possible one, but one used in many Massachusetts schools too may be to have a FLES program. The effects of a FLES program on high school are many and varied but perhaps most pertinent to the present discussion is that it inevitably forces postponement of the discontinuum. We don't need statistics to prove this, but for the skeptic we have some.

In a report completed in 1962, under Title VI of NDEA we attempted to evaluate FLES and its effect on foreign language study in high school. We reached some conclusions statistical and otherwise. One non-statistical conclusion was that the students are much more foreign language conscious–that is, foreign language is as much a part of their program as math or history or English. Furthermore, they are far less fearful of the subject as a result of the FLES program.

Statistically–several facts are pertinent to the subject of retention or "continuum." There was a significant difference in favor of the Somerville pupils compared with the non-FLES pupils in retention from General Language 1 to General Language 2. Seventy-eight of the FLES group enrolled in General Language 1 elected a second year; whereas only 44 per cent of the non-FLES pupils did.

Also considered noteworthy is the fact that 70 per cent of the non-college-bound FLES students–free from the dictates of college entrance requirements–did elect some foreign language during their four years in high school. In fact even among the non-FLES, non-college-bound students at Somerville High School 62 per cent elect a foreign language. In New Jersey in the fall of 1959, 48.2 per cent of all pupils were enrolled in foreign language, and in the fall of the previous year 43.7 per cent were enrolled. The national percentages at the same time were 25 per cent in 1959 and 24.3 per cent in 1958. Although the state and national figures do not cover general language courses, they do involve all pupils, including the college-bound.

During the year of the study, 980 pupils were enrolled in Language 1 and 748 pupils in Language 2, which does not include the FLES classes. Of both Somerville and non-Somerville pupils 76 per cent were retained, there being no difference among the four foreign languages. Whereas 88 per cent of the college preparatory students continued from Language 1 to Language 2, only 34 per cent of the non-college preparatory pupils did.

The local situation, however, is a factor in this phase of the study: except for those who are entering level one of a new foreign language, the majority of FLES pupils enter high school on level two (French or Spanish 2E) rather than the traditional level one. The same situation affects the next phase, retention from level two to level three.

As might be expected a very significant difference favored the Somerville pupils in continuation from Language 2 to Language 3. Of 973 pupils enrolled in Language 2 and 322 in Language 3, the FLES continuation was 47 per cent and the non-FLES 24 per cent.

You note that a large percentage of non-college-bound students elect foreign language--particularly business students and some stay with it through the 4th, and even an occational one through the 5th year level. Another interesting fact is that our neighboring university--Rutgers, which attracts many of our students, still requires only 2 years of language for entrance. Despite this, a small percentage of our college-bound students drop foreign language after two years. Another way of putting this is that only the cream of the crop of non-FLES students continue after Language 2, but only the bottom of the barrel of FLES students drop out before Language 3.

Another fact brought out in this survey, which must influence the discontinuum, is that at mid-term FLES students in a Spanish 3 class achieved approximately 10 per cent higher grades than the non-FLES even though they were a year younger, and in CEEB a difference of 67 points favored the FLES students. One must conclude therefore that FLES *does* help to prevent the discontinuum.

Our State Department has some requirements that help to *present* the discontinuum--one, the requirement of two years of American History. We have attempted to overcome this somewhat by encouraging students to get this requirement out of the way as early as possible.

Other "mechanical" problems must be considered, for example, scheduling. Scheduling Honors English and Honors French or Spanish the same period is a great way to *present* the discontinuum. We probably have the longest high school day in the country, since to overcome this problem we have a nine-period day.

Believing, as who doesn't, that a poorly prepared student is a potential failure and dropout—we have had a policy that a student with a 3 minus average must attend summer school or be tutored before proceeding to the next level. Our State Department has put a kink in this policy by ruling that no grade-point average may be used as a basis for admittance to courses. Since next year will be the first for this regulation, we shall see what strong and persistent persuation will accomplish in maintaining our policy.

Some greater effort should be made to have students look at colleges more seriously before their senior year. They sometimes discover during their junior year that the college of their choice requires two lab sciences or four years of math. In some cases this means dropping their foreign language. While nothing can be done about the math, the lab science *could* be taken in the first two years.

At the N. E. conference we heard some discussion of the pressure now to teach for the A.P. exams, and while I don't deny this pressure, I feel that the results or accomplishments all favor preventing the discontinuum. We go back to the Survey--The FLES program contains a one-year acceleration in Spanish and French in the combined Classes of 1958-61; Somerville students in Spanish 3 or French 3 are in their second year of high school study. The inference from statistics, therefore, is that pupils can advance at least one year in foreign language by the

FLES program with no harmful effect on their achievement. In fact, reaction of present third-year students favors further acceleration.

Currently, the advantage which FLES students may anticipate in high school is a college level course in their senior year. This course leads to the Advanced Placement examination; therefore, the successful passing of this examination carries the further advantage of possible higher college placement and/or college credit, or for some the advantage of having met the college language requirement.

Some students do take the A.P. exam in order to avoid the language requirement in college. Good or bad, it is a factor in preventing the discontinuum in secondary school and we dump it into the lap of our college colleagues from this point.

However, the student angle is not the only one to be considered. Perhaps even more important in this discussion are the factors of articulation, coordination, rapport between levels or schools, well-prepared and lively personnel, and good materials.

If you have a FLES program you know that you are so busy keeping up with the changing philosophies with regard to teaching and materials at this level that you must automatically, if you are to have good articulation, continually re-examine your teaching, your materials and your philosophy.

Though the Survey referred to is only five years old, the section entitled "Description of Courses" bears little resemblance to the present course of study. This may sound as though we don't know what we're doing from one year to the next. This is partly true too.

When we began FLES 17 years ago in 1949, the philosophy was that in the elementary grades the teaching should be all fun and games and that if the pupils saw the written language they were doomed to disaster. Then the philosophy changed to the point at which if they saw some single words and phrases and even copied these, their habits might not be entirely corrupted. Now we know that in the 6th grade they're doing as much or more as formerly they were doing in the 8th grade. Obviously this has caused us to re-examine the junior high and the high school programs.

While we're speaking of materials and teaching, for the best way to "present" the discontinuum is poor teaching, a word might be said about forcing certain methods and materials upon teachers utterly opposed. Some visitors to our school wonder what kind of policy we have when they see ALM being used in two departments but not in the third. It happens that the teachers in these two departments like ALM and the results they get from it. To the teachers of beginners in the other department, ALM is anathema. They believe this method produces only parrots and feeling this way, if they were forced to do this, they might produce just that–parrots.

Freedom of visitation is an important factor in articulation and certainly in rapport. We urge it; we insist upon it. When courses of study are to be changed, all levels come in on the discussion; when it's time to assign classes, teachers are asked for their preferences. It isn't always possible to grant their wishes, but we try; we shift frequently; we try to avoid ruts. We relieve A.P. teachers of one class. A happy teacher makes happier students and happy students continue.

The junior high is one of our greatest hurdles on a smooth road to a long sequence. Whether it is age, temperament, the change from a contained classroom to a departmentalized schedule, turn-over in personnel–whatever–transition is difficult. A youngster who is "gung-ho" in 6th grade sometimes can't bear to hear the words, "Foreign Language," by 8th grade.

Personally I feel premium salaries should be paid so that the finest teachers be employed at this level.

To summarize the main points then:

(1) Start with FLES if possible.
(2) Hypnotize the 7th and 8th graders until they reach 9th grade!
(3) Group students homogeneously as much as possible.
(4) Work on guidance to have students get as much required work done as early as possible.
(5) Schedule honors classes at different hours.
(6) Make the 12th year a college-level course leading to the A.P. exam.
(7) Improve articulation and coordination.
(8) Keep materials and methods up-to-date.
(9) Be good salesmen of your subject.
(10) Get the best trained, liviliest teachers and then keep them happy.

DOROTHY E. CHAMBERLAIN – Coordinator of Foreign Languages in the Somerville, N. J. Public Schools. She earned her A.B. at Dickinson College and has done graduate work at Middlebury College, University of Mexico, University of Havana, and Rutgers University. She has been a high school teacher since 1940 and on two Northeast Conference Committees on FLES.

## The Discontinuum Problem Viewed by A College Professor

by Jack Stein

One of the old refrains in our profession is the college professor's lament that the freshmen in his intermediate language course didn't learn anything in high school. And an equally venerable complaint,which I think has in recent years become even more strident,is the high school teacher's, "My pupils come back to me after a year in college and tell me what an awful experience they had in their language classes. What's the use of knocking ourselves out giving them a good start in language if the colleges are going to spoil it all?" Now both of these are classic non-solutions to the problem we are discussing today. And they are thinly disguised, self-adulatory, let-George-do-it statements which contribute not an iota to the solution of what is a very complex problem. And what's more, they aren't even accurate, they can't *both* be accurate, and I suspect neither one of them is in the form they are usually stated.

The problem is indeed complex, but it is solvable, I think. I would like to take the next few minutes to address myself first to the complexity, which, I think, we are guilty of not recognizing; and second, to the solubility, which, I think, in spite of the great advances our profession has made on many fronts, we have done relatively little about.

It is complex, all right. We all know how delightful homogeneity is. (We remember the minor household revolution that homogenized milk created.) And we all like our first-year classes, because everybody starts from zero and all our pupils go step-wise under our supervision with no insidious influences from elsewhere. This is a very pleasant experience for all concerned, student and teacher alike, particularly in high school where the problems, I submit, are a great deal less complex than they are in the colleges.

But then, in the second year, even in high school, a strange disparity begins to evidence itself. Even if the class is substantially the same one he taught in the first year, the teacher inevitably becomes aware that something has happened over the summer, be it biological, psychological or what have you; but the homogenity has been lost.

Now, if you superimpose upon this fact, which you all seem, by your reactions, to recognize, the problems of transition from high school to college, the psychological problems of that big jump, the maturation problems, the biological problems, you will see that the question of continuity is much more serious. Now, one other non-solution (you see, I am pre-occupied with non-solutions because I think in this one instance our profession has specialized in them) which is very typical in colleges is for the college teacher to exercise his normal routine, the tried and true one, the one he has been doing year after year, with utter disregard of the make-up of the class. This leads him inevitably to the kind of gripe I spoke of at the beginning of my remarks.

There is yet another non-solution which is often brought forth, most recently in an article in the *Modern Language Journal*. The article I refer to describes with devastating accuracy the state of affairs at a language department in a university which will remain nameless, but which is not far from here. One of the solutions it proposes is that the language teaching of this department be given the proper dignity by having every member of the department, no matter how senior, engage in it. Now, if ever there was a classic non-solution to our problem, that is it. If, by some unfortunate miracle, all the senior members of college and university departments who are not now engaged in teaching the language skills were forced to start next September to do so, the cause of good language teaching in colleges and universities would be set back a generation or so.

But please do not misunderstand me; my criticism is not of these men. My criticism is of this over-simplified solution, one which is frequently put forward by groups like this one, by people like us. The innuendo of such a statement—and I most emphatically dissociate myself from it—is usually that these men are simple incompetent, and should be replaced. On the contrary, these men are performing an extraordinarily valuable part of the job of the college and

university department. Indeed, they are performing, sometimes with great effectiveness, a kind of job that few of us in this audience would be able to perform. I call upon groups like this one to recognize our own limitations as well as our competencies and not to confuse the two. We are concerned—more so than some of our colleagues—with the problem of the discontinuum. Very well, let us address ourselves to it as *our* problem, and not simply try to place the responsibility for it elsewhere. So much for the non-solutions.

The suggestion I offer toward a real solution is a rather sweeping one and a rather simple one, but I think it brings the answers to the individual problems in its train; namely, that we, as a profession, urge colleges and universities to establish the position of supervisor or coordinator ("coordinator" is what the Northeast Conference called it a couple of weeks ago) in their language departments. His job would be to relieve those reluctant professors of jobs which they are perhaps at present doing and would prefer not to do and to concentrate his energies on the very problems that we are trying to examine here this morning. He must be a senior person with prestige, with tenure, with security, with expertise, and above all with continuity; one who will be around for quite awhile. He will reshape this part of the college program and address himself in particular to the serious problem of the heterogeneity of the continuum, if I can put it in those terms. He will experiment with flexibility and energy and patience, in an attempt to channel the heterogeneity into as close to a homogeneity as is possible.

This cannot be done in a year, or perhaps not in five, for the problems do not remain constant. So it requires an individual who is interested in the problem and who is prepared and expected and *empowered* to continue to concern himself with it over a period of years. I haven't addressed myself to the many individual problems, such as placement tests, Advanced Placement, credits, methods, textbooks, training of staff, and so on, because the establishment of a coordinator would provide an expert whose chief responsibility is to regulate these matters. By the same token, all these problems will only have muddled, jumbled, confused, often contradictory solutions if the hitherto classic pattern in colleges and universities of distributing the responsibilities as evenly and painlessly as possible among the staff, many of whom regard them as onerous, is perpetuated.

And so, my plea to you and to the profession at large, is to give up the old internecine warfare, which is still very much with us; to get behind a movement to urge colleges and universities to establish the position of coordinator or supervisor of language courses as the solution to their discontinua. I use the plural form, because it is not just a discontinuum. I have limited my discussion to the problem of transition from high school to college, but the transition from one year to the next in college is also a rather serious discontinuum. It is a widespread pattern that the right hand (the man in charge of first-year instruction) doesn't know what the left hand (the man in charge of second year) is doing, and mutatis mutandis through all the course offerings. We should urge on the colleges and universities that a satisfactory solution to a whole host of problems is the establishment of a supervisor of language courses, a senior member of the staff, who will have, or can develop, expertise in handling these problems over an extended period of time.

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# Consistency of Method and Continuity of Foreign Language Instruction

by James R. Powers

In one sense, learning a language is something like getting into heaven. It makes little difference how you achieve it, as long as you get there. But do all language learning paths lead to the same destination? Are they all equally direct, equally efficient, equally economical, equally satisfying? In other words, is method a matter of indifference? And, if so, why be concerned about changes in method? Why bother about consistency? Can't we have continuity in foreign language instruction regardless of method?

First let us be precise about "continuity." It is not articulation, which basically refers to hooking together several separate units. We should, also, as Ralph Tyler pointed out some years ago, distinguish continuity from sequence. Sequence represents what follows what, the arrangement of one thing after another. We then speak about a sequence of topics, a sequence of courses, or a longer sequence of study.

Continuity, on the other hand, may properly be considered as one dimension of learning experience, the vertical dimension along which a succession of related experiences, each one leading into the next, takes the learner to more advanced points. It is this flow, this *enchaînement*, this concatenation that is represented by "continuity."

It is clear, then, that if there is a gap between the second course in a language and the third, or if Tuesday's lesson does not grow out of Monday's, sequence exists without continuity. It is difficult to imagine, however, how continuity could exist without a succession of events.

The desirability of continuity I suppose we can here and now take for granted. Ideally, the schools and colleges should organize a smooth-flowing succession of learning situations which not only permit but also promote constant progress toward the goal.

Let us also clarify what we mean by "method." Method is not a textbook, a material, or even a package of materials, although materials are usually designed to facilitate the use of a particular methodology. Perhaps the foreign language teacher's all too common answer to questions of content as well as method in the form, "I use El Camino Real," or "Huebner and Newmark," or "Ecouter et Parler," is a confession of reliance on the textbook or material as the dictator of both content and method. But so also is the statement, "We use the A–LM method," a confusion of method and material.

By "method" I mean rather a set of principles which teachers follow in designing and organizing systematically a continuous series of learning situations. Subject matter, e.g., language content, is, of course, always part of the learning situation, but just as there is no matter without form, so there is no content in a learning situation without some manner or method of presentation, practice, and/or application.

Method draws on the science and art of the teacher, his whole point of view—his understanding of language and how it is learned, his understanding of what stiuations he must plan if students are to attain the desired results. Little wonder that scholars in the academic disciplines who are working on various projects of curricular reform are rediscovering method, and, that the word and concept have regained respectability in academic circles.

The relation of consistency of method to continuity in foreign language instruction can perhaps be made clear by considering some examples of inconsistency of method, examples well-known to those who visit whole school systems from bottom to top, but not always readily visible to those who are engaged in one phase or another of the program.

In giving these examples I do not wish to give the impression that all school systems are inconsistent—far from it. Some people have worked very hard and successfully to avoid such situations, others to remedy them. But if perfect continuity existed, we might not be here today.

If we look first at the larger components, we may find situations like these:

(1) The FLES program in grades 4, 5, and 6 is based on audio-lingual principles. Listening and speaking skills are being developed before reading and writing. Experience in encountering natural oral language in dialogue situations precedes analysis and the formulations of rules. Translation is avoided, etc.

The junior high school, perhaps with little or no experience in developing a foreign language curriculum, and caught between new-style FLES instruction and an established, conventional high school program, didn't know exactly what to do with the youngsters. Perhaps it was just left to the teacher or teachers to do something with them, and since the time allotments have been inadequate and the teachers have had split programs—and, anyway teaching in the senior high school is much more prestigious—there has been a constant turnover of teachers and a corresponding change of method.

One year the instruction was "conversational", prompted especially by the availability of text books stored in somebody's closet, the next year an enthusiastic but inexperienced teacher tried to implement his eclectic approach with his own hastily devised materials. By the ninth grade, the course was supposed to be the same as the beginning course in the senior high school, so that, after a variety of treatment, the youngsters would be " straightened out" for the rest of the secondary school. Having started audio-lingually in the fourth grade, and having started over again in the seventh grade and a third time in the ninth grade ,the student has experienced great overlapping of content but, on the other hand, diversity of method. Now in senior high school he encounters still another system, because some changes are taking place there. The new language laboratory has pushed the department into partial acceptance of an audio-lingual-structural approach.

In another type of situation we find:

(2) In the junior high school a strong audio-lingual program is carried on, but administrators look upon this as "some conversation to get the pupils interested in, and ready for, the serious study of foreign language." The junior high school instruction then is only a preliminary to a conventional rule and application, translation course in the high school. A grade 7–12 program does not truly exist, but rather two separate programs taught according to two different methodologies or sets of principles.

In situation number three we find:

(3) The students who have completed a two-year Russian course in certain high schools are accustomed to audio-lingual-structural methodology but on entering college they learn that there is no satisfactory place for them. Russian courses there are conducted according to grammar-translation principles and these incoming students do not fit in the intermediate course.

They don't fit in the beginning course either, but they must start over again if they wish to "continue" Russian. Does this suggest one explanation why national enrollments in high school Russian courses have taken a down-turn in the last year or two?

In situation number four we find:

(4) Students who begin Latin in the senior high school are trained according to a methodology derived from a structural analysis of the language. In order to achieve efficiently the objective of "direct reading" ie., reading Latin without recourse to translation, they are taught whole structures and their manipulation in oral and written exercises as directed or suggested by cues or stimuli in the foreign language.

Those students who have already begun the study of Latin in the junior high school, however, come to the senior high school already habituated to the application of rules in translation exercises and the word-by-word translation of the Latin text.

Inconsistency number five:

(5) Four to nine years of audio-lingual study in a modern language have equipped the graduates of Consistency Public Schools with a relatively high level of proficiency in listening comprehension and speaking. When they enter Victorian College, however, the lectures on *Le Dix-septième Siècle* or *El Siglo de Oro* or *Zweihundert Jahre Deutscher Kultur* are given in English!

Of no less importance are the inconsistencies on a smaller scale:

(a) the insistence on rule and application and on translation exercises for four days in the week and the avoidance of translation on the fifth day.
(b) translation exercises at the backboard ("last night's homework") for the first half of the period, non-translation or direct reading during the second half.
(c) the use of gestures foreign language cues, synonyms, and other devices to develop meaning without translation, followed by the question "Now what does it mean in English?"

The addition of the language laboratory also has effected some inconsistencies of method:

(d) in the classroom, "direct method", non-structural exercises, largely questions and answers, are used; in the laboratory the students are expected to do structural exercises or pattern practices for which they are not prepared and which are not directly related to their classwork.
(e) in the classrooms of another school the students grind out translation exercises, filling in blanks and making completions, but, when they go to the laboratory (occasionally), they imitate and memorize dialogues, supposedly to develop oral fluency.

These examples of inconsistency are typical of some school practices, but, although the catalogue is not complete, there is neither time nor need to extend or elaborate it. Perhaps I have made my point that inconsistency of method exists and in a variety of forms. What may not yet be obvious is the relationship of consistency of method to continuity of instruction and the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this talk:

"Can't we have continuity regardless of method?" In content, yes; in instruction and learning, no.

Even if a perfectly ordered arrangement of content—phonology, vocabulary, syntax, morphology, culture—be devised, the continuity of learning experience still depends on the situations in which the student encounters the language and the kinds of things he is expected to do in order to acquire proficiency in the use of language. Language proficiency means technical skills and habits readily available even to the point of automaticity. These are developed by consistency of method, holding to a given set of assumptions and principles, and retarded, even thwarted, by inconsistencies of method.

In this season of the year we may find an analogy in baseball. If a pitcher is being trained to pitch overhand, and is suddenly switched to a sidearm delivery, we can only expect a loss in effectiveness while he learns new skills, especially in controlling his fast ball, curve, change of pace, and whatever else is in his repertoire.

Or perhaps music gives us a closer analogy. The violin student whose technique is changed by a succession of teachers is left in the position of being constantly concerned about his tech-

nique and of having it get in the way of his performance. Behaviors or actions that should be habitual, such as shifting positions with the left hand or controlling a staccato bowing with the right arm, should occur at the level of habit, virtually subconsciously, so that the musician can focus his attention on making music.

When it is time to perform, whether in baseball, music, or language, there is little place for insecurity or uncertainty about technique or skills. The professional pitcher is too busy working on the weaknesses of the batter and getting the batter out to give much attention to how to throw a curve on the low outside corner. The professional violinist is too absorbed in playing Beethoven artistically to focus his attention on problems of controlling his bow for loud or soft passages. Likewise, the person who would communicate readily in a language must be able to perform above the level of conscious processes of applying rules or making sounds which are intelligible when conversing with a native speaker of the foreign language, or above the level of translating a piece of literature when seeking its humanistic and esthetic values. Indeed, language may be far more complex than such activities as we have used for purposes of analogy, since it is sometimes interpretive (in listening and reading) and sometimes creative (in speaking and writing) and must call on an extensive repertoire of sound units in various sequences and intonation patterns, morphological changes, and syntactical structures. If so, it follows that a proportionally greater burden falls on developing that repertoire to the point that the user of the language has free choice; he can do with the language what he wants to do when he wants to do it.

If you are convinced, that there is an important relationship between consistency of method and continuity of instruction and learning, you may well ask what practical suggestions can be made in the interest of avoiding inconsistencies and building truly continuous programs.

Perhaps curiously, my most practical suggestions resulting from rather extensive observations and field work, concern only secondarily concrete things, such as textbooks and tapes, graded reading materials, and the like. Our primary task, as Frank Keppel pointed out, is to settle the issues before trying to solve the specific problems. If we don't settle the issues, continuity will be achieved only accidentally, and much hard work will be ineffective.

There are four issues which since the turn of the century have been basic to the teaching of foreign languages in our schools and colleges and on which we must take a position:

(1) Is the base of instruction to be the oral or written language?
(2) Are oral habits to be developed before reading or are all skills to be developed concurrently?
(3) Is experience in using language to precede grammatical analysis or are rules to be taught for application?
(4) Is translation to be avoided or is it to be used as a basic process of language learning?

On a national or even on a state-wide basis these issues were never settled over a period of sixty-five years or more, and the truth is, that despite statements in courses of study, they have not yet been settled in many school systems and colleges, as evidenced by the examples of typical inconsistencies cited earlier.

To these four issues can and should be added a fifth of more recent origin: Is foreign language instruction to apply pertinent developments in current linguistic science or is it to disregard linguistic theory and research?

Consistency of method depends on the degree to which the foreign language teaching staff agree on the positions taken on these issues and, therefore, on the extent to which they share a common point of view regarding language and language learning. If unity at the local school system level does not exist, it is the responsibility of the local supervisor, coordinator, or department head charged with the development of the whole program to develop that unity both by selection of teachers and by in-service work. Uniformity of procedures or techniques, on the other



hand, is neither necessary nor desirable, since teachers should be free to devise the most effective learning situations for their particular students—as long as they stay within the limits of the principles accepted for the school system.

The staff work required is, needless to say, the province of persons of considerable understanding of both language instruction and human relations, who, expecting no miracles, proceed with all deliberate speed to build a consistent program on the basis of a unified staff. The State is the richer for having many fine, responsible local leaders who deserve our congratulations for giving us examples of what can be done. I would also remind those of you who feel that you have problems that state supervisors are only too happy to give every possible assistance.

As for the development of continuity beyond the schools into the colleges, we have different jurisdictions and some different problems. The colleges have traditionally assumed that their academic freedom entitled them not only to offer whatever courses they judged appropriate but also to teach the courses in whatever manner the instructor preferred. But times are changing. Several leading universities have appointed high level personnel to coordinate foreign language instruction and may, therefore, develop greater consistency within the institution. And despite the unfortunate experience of the Long Island Conference last year (as reported in a recent issue of MLJ), I perceive a growing sense of responsibility on the part of the colleges to take account of the increasing foreign language proficiency of their entering students. It will still take a lot of doing, however, but I am hopeful that our new MFLA will do what the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools seems to have neglected to do in recent years, namely, carry on a persistent program to follow up what is being done here today, using a variety of means to arrange confrontations of those people who can make decisions that affect continuity of learning.

In conclusion, if we can settle the larger questions, we shall then be in a position to deal reasonably and consistently with the smaller, but still very important questions such as: What organization of listening situations will result in continuity of experience in listening comprehension? What kinds of materials are needed to provide continuity of experience in the development of reading skills? Can cultural materials be organized systematically with a view to continuity of learning?

But first let's settle the issues.

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## Goals and Methods: Consistencies and Incosistencies

by Robert J. Nelson

We guarantee consistency of method by guaranteeing consistency of goals. But to begin at least in part with how we guarantee consistency of method, it seems that, in this setting, the very question assumes consistency to be desirable. This has become a truism among many language teachers, especially those to whom the metaphorical "new key" looks more to the locksmith's than to the composer's art. Such "new keyers" want their students to insert the magic key into doors leading to rooms each rather consistently limited in function and to be entered into in the following order: auditorium, parlor, library and escritoire.

However, the truism is not universally subscribed to either by language teachers or the American public at large. At least in principle, American education is characterized by experimentation: "What works—works" is the framing truism within which the truism on consistency of method must make itself heard. Thus, recent reactions against methodology are not surprising—to cite two examples, or better, theoretical sources of this reaction from your own area, witness Noam Chomsky's cautions to 1966 Northeast Conferees[1] and Jerome S. Bruner's elegant pox on all the houses of univocal theorizing about human learning.[2]

With his skepticism about the view of language as habit and his emphasis on innovative linguistic behavior, Chomsky offers little to those believing in consistency of method, for consistency and habit obviously "go together." Again, Bruner's emphasis on complexity, community and creativity in the learning situation and on curiosity and surprise as motives expresses an approach long held dear if not so felicitously articulated by many language teachers. Such distinguished theoretical support encourages these teachers to question methods whose consistent application seems to dampen curiosity and oversimplify when it does not de-humanize the human learner.

Still, I believe that consistency of methods is desirable. What may be secondary in a theoretical framework of generic or universal language learning, may become primary in specific, second-language learning. Habit as a methodological principle may not, as Chomsky says, be so important as innovation in the four-year old's experiments with his own language, but it may be very important in the 14-year old's experiments with a second language. Again, in "total field" theories of learning like Bruner's, many people see cause for an ambitious enrichment of the first-year foreign-language course. But such people should remember that they are dealing with not one but two separate "total fields" and that the interference between the fields in cultural terms is perhaps even more disturbing for the learner than those interferences which contrastive grammar has taught us to look for in the very elementary stages.

This seems especially true of the adolescents and young adults who make up the vast majority of our learning constituency and who will continue to do so for quite a long time. Frankly, I do not look to FLES as a pace-setter. The Alkonis-Brophy report a few years ago is depressing for those who hope FLES could play such a role.[3] The present allocation of our resources—in theoretical investigations, school budgeting and qualified teachers—seems to me too meagre for such a hope. The real pace-setting must take place at the secondary school level. There, the homogeneity of the bodies concerned—the students, on the one hand, and the teachers, on the other—gives the best hope for the consistent shaping of methods and goals. The colleges, and especially the universities, are just too heterogeneous both in their students and their faculties and, I fear, it is the heterogeneity of the faculties which makes it most difficult to insure consistency of method at that level.[4] As Jack Stein of Harvard told the assembled Northeast Conferees earlier this month, one must not tax the college people too much with this heterogeneity and the seeming indifference that emerges from it. At least, not tax them for some of the indifference. The very logic of the educational process—I am tempted to say: the very biologic of that process—implies that at the college level students as well as faculty no longer be concerned with methods and that they be more concerned with independent uses of the second language—at least, in those languages they present from their high school.

It probably looks to some as if here is another college teacher arrogantly telling the secondary level teachers that, to paraphrase Robert Hall,[5] they are to leave their literature alone! I admit to the charge if—and it is a big IF—if you have the student for only two years and, in some teacher-student ratios, even if you have him for three years.[6] This time factor seems so crucial to me that it alone should force tightly organized sequences on us, with a consistent separation of the functions and a delayed committment to use of the language for intellectual or cultural purposes. Bruner trenchantly observes that "we get interested in what we get good at."[7] Forgetting which end of the learning process they are at, many teachers turn this around and assume that the student "gets good at what we are interested in." But the "we" in this second case is the teachers who want to use worthwhile literature and other sophisticated materials while the student is struggling to master the language denotationally, telling and reporting without judging or interpreting—and to do so while he is living in, what from his position as a student of the foreign language, is a foreign country called the United States of America.

I know the panicky feeling that comes over many a teacher in the seventh week of the second (and sometimes the first) semester of the first year: Good Lord, here they are practically men and women and these students have not read *Phèdre* or *Das Stundenbuch!* So out comes the shot gun of the four-skills: a single blast of everything, but with an overload of cultural pellets. Even if the student is up to it intellectually and emotionally, his head and heart are so far ahead of his tongue that, to undo the knot the foreign language has tied around his tongue, he pleads: "Can I say it in English?" This plea seems to me experimental evidence of the kind John Carroll finds it difficult to obtain for his guestimate that "the ability to reason depends on verbally formulated inferential steps."[8]

I have reopened the debate between the small–c culturalists and the capital–c Culturalists—sometimes crudely put as a debate between speakers and readers. In the debate, I am more partial to both extremes than I am to the center. If the resources at our disposal are to continue to be limited, we must decide on either mastery of the audio-lingual skills or a serious plombing of the various language areas, perhaps with much reliance on English. Compromises between these two do a disservice both to the student and the intellectual heritage of the language for which the compromise is sometimes invoked. Of course, there are those who claim that the combination does not involve a compromise. I am skeptical on both practical and speculative grounds. I've seen too many victims of the shotgun (I've bagged some of them in my early days, I regret to say), but just reflecting on what's involved in reading and talking about reading in one's native language should make us all skeptical. If the student is to be "at home" in the foreign literature and language, he needs far more saturation in the language itself—using it, experimenting with it—than seems possible when he is asked to do everything at once, in a couple of years, at best four hours a week, almost from the start. "At–homeness" is hard to measure, but we have a couple of indices which can at least help us to pose the problem more carefully in our efforts to resolve it. Thus, if a student reads in English at a rate of 300 words a minute, he should be able to read a text of comparable difficulty in the foreign literature at the same rate. If he speaks English at 160 words a minute,then he should be capable of a comparable rate in the foreign language. Without methods consistently guaranteed to achieve this comparability of the student with himself, we cheat him and delude ourselves.[9]

We guarantee consistency of method, then, by guaranteeing consistency of goals. Which means we shall have to agree on what our goals are. *We*—we teachers at more and more meetings of this kind, particularly of the kind bringing people from the different levels together, and more particularly of the kind bringing college teachers into the dialogue. *We*—the students. Let's stop assuming the student's illwill, trying to overcome it by detours through the unconscious faculties, the ensnaring of the student through the sugar-coated pill of either great literature in the first year or sunny days in Spain after three weeks of intensive drill. Rather, let us appeal to both the student's good will and his will-power. Much of learning is work, maybe even drudgery—although, like Robert Lado, I suspect that much of the drudgery connected with drills is suffered more by the teacher than the student. *We*—the administrators and the public they

represent. Let us get such administrators—especially the reportedly hostile ones—into such meetings and tell them how far they really must go.

That seems to me to be very far. It is time for us to stop taxing the more traditionalist among us with obduracy and snobbery. Some people are consistently "traditional"—citing grammar-translation-reading in their goals and methods—out of sheer practicality. They look at the limited time, low student motivation, high student enrollment, rudimentary state of learning theory and paucity of equipment—and just throw up their hands. And unless we get more of all of these except the enrollment, I agree with them. We teachers may be participating in one of what the social-critic Paul Goodman calls the missed-revolutions of our time.[10] We have not really exploited programmed instruction and technological advances. I do not mean to frighten anyone with talk of presumably inhuman teaching machines or technologically disemployed teachers. More seriously, we have not really reflected on the implications of these "revolutions" whether we believe in or want to use their techniques. Consider, for example, self-instruction as an unexploited resource which these revolutions have pointed up. Self-instruction releases the classroom hour for what it really should be: an experimental situation, in which the student tries out whatever skills or knowledge the teacher has set him to learn on his own.

The ultimate goal is what the late, lamented George Scherer called in his justly famous Report on Reading—"liberated" usage.[11] Now, in our understandable preoccupation with methods at the early stage of language learning we are unconsciously led to look for methods and techniques in the last stage—the stage at which the student uses the language for his own ends and needs. But a technique is a functional exercise embodying a norm and aiming at standard expression. In a free society, at the level of liberated expression, we want students to express themselves as individuals. Here is where Chomsky and Bruner might justly be of theoretical and practical value, here where we want innovation and inconsistency, where we should seek not methods but *conditions* to permit a release of the student.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. "Linguistic Theory," *Language Teaching: Broader Contexts*, 1966: Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Robert G. Mead, Jr., *Editor*. Copies of the Reports available from the Modern Language Association Materials Center, 4 Washington Place, New York City 10003.

2. *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), passim.

3. Nancy V. Alkonis and Mary A. Brophy, "A Survey of FLES Practices," *Current Issues in Language Teaching*, 1962: Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, William F. Bottiglia, *Editor*.

4. The heterogeneity is a function of many forces in complicated interplay—economic, psychological, sociological. Think, for example, about the rapid turnover in personnel in most language departments in the major universities in the country during this period of intensive "faculty raids." Without stability, continuity of premises and purposes among the teachers is as key a problem as continuity of training among students. Again responsible literary scholarship demands a total committment even as responsible language pedagogy. "A chacun son métier."

5. *Leave Your Language Alone!* (Ithaca: Linguistica, 1950).

6. I am aware that, happily enough, the two-year "requirement" is giving way to longer sequences in light of the lessons of the past decade. Nevertheless, the pattern is still to be found for *second* foreign-language electives, so my caution seems advisable. More importantly, I cannot stress too greatly the dangers of introducing literature even into longer sequences if the teacher-student ratio is too great—higher than 1—14. say.

7. "The Will to Learn," *Commentary*, 41, No. 2 (February 1966), 43.

8. *Language and Thought* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 93.

9. At this point in my speech, a gracious lady in the audience told me afterwards, I seemed to be asking us language teachers to apologize for thinking and for asking our students to think. Quite to the contrary, I am anxious to bring our students to that point in the use of the foreign language where, as far as *their* auditors can tell, the students are "thinking" in the foreign language with a facility comparable to the facility they show in speaking English. Though we Humanists resist quantitative measurements like the very devil, I fear we shall have to pay more heed to them if we are to be more objective and less self-deluding about the kind of thinking we think we find in our students when they speak the foreign language at rates only half as great as their rates in English.

10. *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (New York: Random House, 1960), especially Chapter XI, "The Missing Community." I am aware that it may seem wilfully paradoxical to some (perhaps to Goodman himself) for me to invoke him here in calling attention to the "missed revolution" in language learning implicit in the technology of sound equipment. For humanists who fear the inhuman use of human beings they presume to find in such equipment, I urge the reading of my next few sentences above. However, I will not deny that I do not feel that the use of such equipment would indeed *release* the student for superior, more efficacious learning of basic language. Especially the American student, with his pragmatic, manipulative, thing-loving sensibility. I suspect that students are a lot less afraid of tape-machines than many teachers. It seems criminal to me not to provide every *willing* language student with such equipment, especially as it becomes more and more economical in both cost and size. And I suspect that Goodman would agree with me that it makes much more sense to put the student on his own, at his own *individual* learning rate in the learning of the inevitable mechanical phases of the language. Finally, I think Goodman would agree that it is a wasteful allocation of human, social and financial resources to use expensively trained literary scholars as drill-masters and policemen, metronomes and mimics. Let us have an end to pieties and platitudes which console the teacher who fears he has been by-passed by technology. In the Age of Leisure which rushes in on us we Humanists are the truly New Men. Let us act like men of our age then.

11. "Reading for Meaning," *Language Learning: The Intermediate Phase*, 1963: Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, William F. Bottiglia, *Editor*. *What* will the student read on his way to this "liberated stage?" As my principles here imply, the traditional fare seems most inappropriate. Great literature is by definition immediately allusive and connotational—it sends the student's head far ahead of his tongue and ear (and eye, as Scherer shows in considering the problem of vocabulary). Readings of a more frankly informational, denotational character are more appropriate at this pre-liberated stage. For a further discussion of this point, see my "Realia and Realities: From Language to Literature," *PSMLA Bulletin*, XLIII, No. 2 (April 1965), 65–72. Reprints available from Modern Language Association Materials Center, 4 Washington Place, New York City 10003.

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## Placement of Students: FLES

by Anne Slack

All educators, both in our country and abroad, agree today that the younger the child is when he starts learning a foreign language the more chance he has to speak it fluently and accurately. The major reason why most school systems do not start their FLES programs in the first grade seems to be the lack of trained teachers to provide a continuous sequence of FL instruction in the elementary school.

Grades 3, or 4, are generally selected as a reasonable beginning, one that can still capitalize on the young child's interest and ability to imitate sounds accurately, one that can generally assure continued FL instruction in the elementary school and into Junior High School.

The child of today, the future adult of the 21st century, is to receive from his early school years a *broad* general education if he is to function properly in, and contribute to the world in which he is going to live. For all the many reasons enumerated in dozens of articles published in the past decade, we recognize today that the study of a foreign language in these early formative years is part of the child's general education. Therefore, *all* children should be given an opportunity to study a foreign language in the grades. Exceptions are of course those with serious speech difficulties and other similar disabilities.

The contention, still advanced by some educators *and* language teachers, that only the "bright" child should be taught a foreign language in the grades does not find corroboration in any of the many research projects conducted in this area.

Children of age 9 or 10 in most European countries are expected to study at least one foreign language for several years. This is true not only for the "bright" ones but also for the average ones. The fact that not all succeed in speaking the target language fluently is due, as we well know, to the often antiquated methods and materials used, and not because the children are unable to learn.

In our country all children are taught reading, writing, social studies, science, arithmetic, and even the new math, regardless of their I.Q. and achievement – or lack of it – in these subjects. True, some are expected to learn more and faster than others, because of their exceptional abilities, but our schools still offer to all, and expect from all, depending on individual ability, a certain degree of performance in the essential disciplines.

Is FLES an essential discipline? . . . We teachers of Modern Foreign Languages sell ourselves and our product short, and weaken our position when bargaining for more recognition, time and money, if we advocate, or accept, that:

1. FLES is only for the gifted", and that programs are to be established on this basis only. Or . . .
2. FLES is offered to all children, but after the first year of instruction, only the "good" students are allowed to continue in the program.

No wonder so many uninformed people – parents and educators – still consider foreign languages as non-essential, when the profession is so unsure of itself and of its product, and provides the opposition with the very arguments that will stifle the growth and spread of foreign language instruction. One can't help wonder what would have happened to our country, and indeed to the world, if some of our most brilliant physicists, doctors, social scientists, *and* teachers had been "dropped" from math, English, and other classes, because at the tender age of 9 or 10 their teachers didn't think they showed particular promise in those subjects!

Surely the "gifted" should be offered, whenever possible, a more challenging, a more accelerated FLES program than the average children, just as they are offered more challenges

in the three R's. That doesn't mean that the average, or even borderline child does not "deserve" to be in the FLES program.

When we advocate FLES for all children, we don't mean to imply that any kind of "schnitzelbank" program should be adopted. We don't mean to imply either that tests do not belong in FLES. Nor do we suggest that any kind of tests, prepared by well-meaning but uninformed, unsophisticated teachers, will provide an adequate evaluation of the program. Testing, serious, professional testing, is very necessary in FLES, not to reject the poor students – these are indeed our challenge and should get more of our attention – but to evaluate honestly the whole FLES offering in a given school system, pinpoint and correct its weaknesses, and help the teachers evaluate their own performance.

One more point on the subject of "Who Takes FLES?": The argument that there are not enough competent FLES teachers is totally irrelevant to this particular question, since some systems which *do* have enough FLES specialists still believe that the program should be reserved for the intellectual elite. Moreover, it is only if we *believe* and *demand* that all our children be taught a foreign language in the elementary school that the Departments of Education and the Departments of Modern Foreign Languages will eventually cooperate in large numbers to provide us with school teachers with a foreign language proficiency.

The placement of FLES students in junior high school should be done on the basis of achievement during the FLES sequence, the interest of the student to pursue the study of a particular foreign language, and of course the judgement of the 6th grade foreign language specialist or classroom teacher. It goes without saying that students coming into the junior high school with three or four years of foreign language instruction should be placed in classes especially designed for them and not "lumped together" with those beginning the study of a foreign language in the 7th grade.

ANNE SLACK – Associate Director of the Modern Language Project. She received her education in universities in Algiers and Paris. Her long experience at the elementary school level has been especially in television and films. She has been Supervisor of FLES in the in the Schenectady, N. Y. Public Schools, a member of various committees on the Northeast Conference, and is now associate editor of the *French Review,* a member of the Massachusetts Advisory Committee on Foreign Languages, and a member of the Advisory Council of the Sorbonne Study Program of Central College, Iowa.

## How Do We Place Students Properly?

by Robert Collier

The selection of students for the study of a foreign language at the junior or senior high school level has always been a most difficult problem. The results of foreign language aptitude tests or I.Q. tests have been used in predicting a student's success in a foreign language but have not always proved satisfactory. In larger systems, where a number of elementary schools feed into a large junior high school, teacher recommendations vary making placement difficult.

Prior to this year each student in Belmont Junior High School has been grouped in one block for English, mathematics, science, social studies and French or Latin. With the inception of data processing we will have an individualized program for each pupil in each subject area. This means that a student may be placed in a high English division, middle mathematics division and then will be evaluated for the study of French or Latin.

Several criteria have been used for grouping our students in each of the major subject areas. For example, the pupil's rating in a foreign language is determined by his I.Q., level of reading comprehension, vocabulary development, total language (grammar) as measured on standardized tests and the FLES teacher's recommendation.

These various scores and teacher ratings are converted to a single common denominator by using a single digit number called a stanine. A stanine is a value in a simple nine-point scale. These steps are expressed along a scale ranging from 1 (low) to 9 (high) with the value of 5 always representing average performance for pupils in a designated grade level.

After several meetings with the FLES teachers during which the stanine concept was explained, these teachers were asked to assign a stanine rank to each student, including in their stanine evaluation everything that could not be measured by tests. Two of the most important characteristics considered were the pupil's desire to learn a foreign language and his auditory discrimination.

Each FLES teacher was asked to take one of his classes and divide it into three levels (Above Average – Average – Below Average). Each was then required to take the Above Average group and again subdivide them into three levels or stanines so that 9 represented superior students, 8 minus students achieving well and 7 minus those having a little difficulty in the top level. The same approach was then used in ranking the below average and average students using the numbers 3, 2, 1 for the former and 6, 5, 4 for the latter. Next, the FLES teachers were given a *suggested* guide to aid them in assigning the stanine rank. Finally, the FLES teachers' stanine reports and the various tests were recorded in stanines on the IBM cards by the secretary. From this point on everything else was completed by the computer.

We were concerned over the selection of pupils for the foreign languages. We wanted students whom we felt were qualified for a foreign language and would profit from the study of French or Latin. At the same time we did not want to have a student, who was deficient in two or more of the required subject areas, to be overloaded with a foreign language. With this philosophy in mind the data (students' I.Q., vocabulary, reading level, total language and FLES teacher's recommendation) for each pupil was fed into the computer. The computer totaled the data on each student and when it recorded the FLES teacher's recommendation it multiplied this factor by 3. This ultimate piece of information on each student was called the Composite Prognostic Score (the C. P. S.) or the "Predictive Score for success in a Foreign Language".

It was possible for a student to receive a perfect Composite Score of 90 to a low 10. The computer prepared a print out sheet listing the C.P.S. in descending order for foreign languages. Students selected for French or Latin had to achieve a C.P.S. of 60 plus. This meant, generally speaking, that a student with a 60 had slightly above average ability and would be doing at least average work in the classroom, and achieving at grade level or above in reading, vocabulary and grammar.

There were exceptions to these so-called cut-off points. Some students had a C.P.S. of 50 or 52 and a high FLES teacher recommendation of 7 or 8. These students have been selected for French or Latin because the FLES teacher rating takes precedence over standardized tests. Other students had a C.P.S. of 70 and a FLES teacher rating of 3 or 4. These students also have been programmed for French because our findings indicate this type of student usually is quiet and rather hesitant about volunteering, thus accounting for the lower teacher rating.

Our seventh grade foreign language program is equivalent to the first semester of French I and the students who have been selected will be heterogeneously grouped. However, the students will be re-evaluated in March and they will be grouped into 2 levels for the 2nd semester of French I in grade 8. Some of our foreign language teachers were in favor of grouping in grade 7 but most of us felt that our selection policy had greatly reduced the wide range of abilities. We were also interested in encouraging the borderline student to seek extra help after school and hope the FLES teacher will also allow for individual differences even with a homogeneously selected group of students.

ROBERT COLLIER – Director of Guidance, Research and Student Personnel Services in the Belmont Public Schools. He earned his B.S. at Cortland State College, New York, and has done Graduate Study at Syracuse University and Boston University where he received his Ed.M. He also did Advanced Graduate Study in Guidance and Administration at Boston University. He has been a teacher-counselor at Andover, Director of Guidance at both Andover and Danbury, Connecticut.

## Remarks Addressed to The Problem

by F. Andre Paquette

Since I have only a few minutes to discuss the question of articulation between school and college, I will not use this time to echo the various accusations which are uselessly repeated by college professors and high school teachers. If you wish to read a presentation of the problem, I suggest that you consult the report of a Working Committee of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages for 1965, headed by Professor Micheline Dufau of New York University, which discussed "From School to College: The Problem of Continuity."[1] If you wish to read about the feelings of a high school teacher, I suggest that you consult the April 1966 of the *Modern Language Journal* and Mr. David Kaplan's article entitled, "The Case of the Conference: The Dialogue Remains a Monologue."[2] Rather than encourage you to continue casting stones at one another, permit me to be bold enough to suggest several approaches that this professional organization might wish to consider in trying to solve the problem.

1. You may wish to consider the possibility of preparing descriptions of public school foreign language sequences similar to those published in the *Arizona Foreign Language Teachers' Forum*. Most of you do not receive this newsletter, but I am sure that Professor Goding, editor of the *Bay State FL Bulletin* and members of the foreign language staff in the State Department of Education do. They could tell you for example that the April 1966 issue of that newsletter carries an 11 page description of the modern foreign language program in Pueblo High School. It includes descriptions of the program in general, descriptions of the beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses, commentaries on the texts and materials used in the courses, descriptions of extra-curricular activities, and an explanation of the practice-teaching program. Obviously, you could not do this for every high school in the state, but if you could publish several of these, if you could agree on the elements which a good description of any public school program ought to include, then perhaps every school could prepare such a description, multi-copy that description and have it available to send to colleges and universities with students interested in continuing their foreign language studies.

2. Number two is very simple. It is time for the colleges and universities to do essentially what I have proposed the public schools do. But the colleges and universities must guard against the temptation to simply reprint the uninformative course descriptions which are so frequently hidden in college catalogs. Perhaps it would be worthwhile if a committee of this organization—made up of college, university, and public school teachers of foreign languages—could sit down and write out how each would like the others' programs described. This would assure that the descriptions of public school courses and the descriptions of college and university sequences of study would meet the intended need. In effect, this could be the first task of a standing committee of the organization on articulation between school and college.

3. To assist such a committee, it would be useful, and probably have a salutary purging effect, if everyone here at this meeting, regardless of teaching level, would list—if only in rough form—all the gripes he has which relate to articulation from the levels below to the levels above or vice versa. These could be sent to the committee on articulation and serve as a guide to help them to develop the format for the reports, suggested in 1 and 2 above.

4. The fourth possibility is one which requires considerable interest and effort. It may be worthwhile for a number of schools and colleges to consider pairing themselves for one, two, or more years. This process of pairing might include exchange of the reports suggested above, exchange of language teachers in order to visit or even to actually teach the courses in the other's institutions and even some coffee chats involving the entire high school faculty and the college language and literature faculty.

5. The fifth suggestion which deserves the attention of the entire association is that of college foreign language placement. You have the potential for making a critical examination of the procedures used for placing students in beginning, intermediate, and advanced courses at the

college level. To begin your investigation you may wish to use some of the suggestions of and the questionnaire proposed in the Northeast Conference report which I have already mentioned. Such a study should seek to determine whether foreign language entrance requirements are indeed that or *degree* requirements. Such an investigation ought to dispel many of the myths relating to the use of results from CEEB and AP examinations as well as those from standard cooperative tests. Colleges and universities should try to indicate to the secondary schools how they may provide more precise information about their students. You should identify and eliminate the types of information which are useless. A professional committee may suggest that a more comprehensive, state-wide approach in college placement should be advocated by this group and proposed to the appropriate agencies and institutions.

6. You may want to consider a sixth possibility. The State of North Carolina has tried to improve communication between secondary and college teachers of languages by instituting a modern language forum. In March of this year, the forum considered at some length the problems of articulation and teacher preparation. You may not agree with some of the conclusions which they have reached, but it is the principle of providing an open forum for honest criticism that I commend for your consideration. It seems to me that one of the essential marks of a profession is its capacity for self-criticism and, through self-criticism, self-improvement. It is with this in mind that I hope you will consider these few ways of trying to improve continuity from school to college.

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Micheline Dufau, "From School to College: The Problem of Continuity," *Reports of the Working Committees, Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages,* (1965), 102–125.

2. David Kaplan, "The Case of the Conference: The Dialogue Remains a Monologue," *The Modern Language Journal,* L (April 1966), 204–207.

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